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Institutional Culture, Social Interaction and Learning

Harry Daniels

Introduction

As the title of this paper suggests my re-ordering of the name of the Journal (Learning, Culture and Social Interaction) reflects my interest in the way in which the cultures of institutions and the patterns of social interaction within them exert a formative effect on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of learning. This is part of a more general argument to which I subscribe. This is that we need a social science that articulates the formative effects of a much broader conception of the ‘social’ than that which inheres in much of the slew of research which emanates from the writings of Vygotsky and his colleagues. The boundaries which shape researcher’s horizons often serve to severely constrain the research imagination. Sociologists have sought to theorise relationships between forms of social relation in institutional settings and forms of talk. Sociocultural psychologists have done much to understand the relationship between thinking and speech in a range of social settings with relatively little analysis and description of the institutional arrangements that are in place in those settings. At present there is a weak connection between these theoretical traditions.

As Sawyer notes:

Socioculturalists have rarely drawn substantively on sociology, political science or history—disciplines that argue for the irreducibility of macro-level entities or structures such as social class, educational level, geographic region, race and ethnicity, social networks and institutional structures, and social power and its forms. (Sawyer, 2002, p 301)

This paper is part of an endeavour to forge the hitherto elusive connection between macrostructures of power and control and micro processes of the formation of pedagogic consciousness. It does this through the development of an approach in which a dialectical relation between theoretical and empirical work draws on the strengths of the legacies of sociological and psychological sources to provide a theoretical model which is capable of descriptions at levels of delicacy which may be tailored to the needs of specific research questions. The development of the

1 theoretical model along with the language of description it generates will hopefully
2 open the way for new avenues of research in which different pedagogic practices are
3 designed and evaluated in such a way that the explicit and tacit features of processes
4 of the mutual shaping of person and context may be examined (e.g Daniels, 2010).
5 This will enable significant contributions to be made to the possibilities for studying
6 fields or networks of interconnected practice (such as those of the home, school and
7 community) with their partially shared and often contested objects. Alongside this
8 enhancement of the ‘outward’ reach of the theory must be increased capacity and
9 agility in tackling ‘inward’ issues of subjectivity, personal sense, emotion, identity,
10 and moral commitment. In the past these two directions have tended to remain the
11 incompatible research objects of different disciplines with emphasis on collective
12 activity systems, organizations and history on the one hand and subjects, actions and
13 situations on the other hand (Engeström, & Sannino, 2010).
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25 In this paper, a more constrained notion of the social is deployed. I will consider the
26 institutional level of social formation. I will outline an approach to the study of
27 learning which examines the way in which societal needs and priorities and/or
28 curriculum formations are recontextualised within institutions such as schools or
29 universities. This approach seeks to understand, analyse and describe the structural
30 relations of power and control within institutions and deploy a language of description
31 to the discursive formations to which the structural formations give rise. I argue that
32 the specialised communicative practices, which particular institutions seek to
33 maintain, differentially deflect and direct the attention, gaze and patterns of
34 interaction of socially positioned participants. This paper builds on previous writing in
35 which I have explored the interface between post-Vygotskian psychology and
36 sociologies of cultural transmission (e.g. Daniels 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010). It is, of
37 course, a work in process and as yet far from realising its aspirations.
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51 Institutions and the social formation of mind

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53 The way in which the social relations of institutions are regulated has cognitive and
54 affective consequences for those who live and work inside them. The current state of
55 the art in the social sciences struggles to provide a theoretical connection between
56 specific forms, or modalities, of institutional regulation and consciousness. Attempts
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1 which have been made to do so tend not to be capable of generating analyses and
2 descriptions of institutional formations which are predictive of consequences for
3 individuals. At the same time social policy tends not engage with the personal
4 consequences of different forms of institutional regulation. This paper will discuss an
5 approach to making the connection between the principles of regulation in
6 institutions, discursive practices and the shaping of consciousness. This approach is
7 based on the work of the British sociologist Basil Bernstein and the Russian social
8 theorist Lev Vygotsky.
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11 From the sociological point of view Bernstein outlined the challenge as follows:
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14 The substantive issue of . . . [this] theory is to explicate the process whereby a
15 given distribution of power and principles of control are translated into
16 specialised principles of communication differentially, and often unequally,
17 distributed to social groups/classes. And how such a differential/unequal
18 distribution of forms of communication, initially (but not necessarily
19 terminally) shapes the formation of consciousness of members of these
20 groups/classes in such a way as to relay both opposition and change.
21 (Bernstein 1996: 93)
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25 The following assertion from Vygotsky recasts the issue in more psychological vein
26 but with same underlying intent and commitment
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29 Any function in the child's cultural [ie higher] development appears twice, or
30 on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the
31 psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological
32 category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. This is
33 equally true with regard to voluntary attention , logical memory, the formation
34 of concepts, and the development of volition. ... it goes without saying that
35 internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and
36 functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all
37 higher functions and their relationships. (Vygotsky 1981: 163)
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41 I argue that, taken together the Vygotskian and Bernsteinian social theory have the
42 potential to make a significant contribution to the development of a theory of the
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1 social formation of mind in specific pedagogic modalities. Following Bernstein,
2 pedagogy may be thought of a sustained process whereby somebody(s) acquires new
3 forms or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria, from
4 somebody(s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and evaluator
5 (Bernstein, 2000). Defined in this way the general practitioner, the policy maker, the
6 therapist, and the broadcaster are all involved in a form of pedagogic practice.
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11 A sociological focus on the rules which shape the social formation of discursive
12 practice may be brought to bear on those aspects of psychology which argue that
13 cultural artefacts, such as pedagogic discourse, both explicitly and implicitly, mediate
14 human thought and action. Sociocultural theorists argue that individual agency has
15 been significantly under acknowledged in Bernstein's sociology of pedagogy
16 (e.g. Wertsch, 1998a). Vygotsky's work provides a compatible account which places
17 emphasis on individual agency through its attention to the notion of mediation.
18 Sociologists complain that post-Vygotskian psychology is particularly weak in
19 addressing relations between local, interactional contexts of 'activity' and 'mediation',
20 where meaning is produced and wider structures of the division of labour and
21 institutional organisation act to specify social positions and their differentiated
22 orientation to 'activities and 'cultural artefacts' (e.g. Fitz 2007).
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Many sociologists have sought to theorise relationships between forms of social
relation in institutional settings and forms of talk. Sociocultural psychologists,
working in the post-Vygotskian tradition, have done much to understand the
relationship between thinking and speech in a range of social settings with relatively
little analysis and description of the institutional arrangements that are in place in
those settings.

We can never 'speak from nowhere', given that we can speak (or more
broadly, act) only by invoking mediational means that are available in
the 'cultural tool kit' provided by the sociocultural setting in which we
operate ... this does not mean that we are mechanistically determined
by, or are mere puppets of, the mediational means we employ, but it
does mean that constraints of some kind always exist. (Wertsch et al,
1995, p. 25)

Vygotsky's sociogenetic approach

Vygotsky provided a rich and tantalising set of suggestions that have been taken up and transformed by social theorists as they attempt to construct accounts of the formation of mind which to varying degrees acknowledge social, cultural and historical influences. There is also no doubt that Vygotsky straddled a number of disciplinary boundaries. Davydov (1995: 15) went as far to suggest that was involved in 'a creative reworking of the theory of behaviorism, gestalt psychology, functional and descriptive psychology, genetic psychology, the French school of sociology, and Freudianism.

Recent developments in post Vygotskian theory have witnessed considerable advances in the understanding of the ways in which human action shapes and is shaped by the contexts in which it takes place. They have given rise to a significant amount of empirical research within and across a wide range of fields in which social science methodologies and methods are applied in the development of research-based knowledge in policy making and practice in academic, commercial and industrial settings. His is not a legacy of determinism and denial of agency rather he provides a theoretical framework which rests on the concept of mediation. These developments have explored different aspects of Vygotsky's legacy at different moments. As Puzyrei (2007) notes, his work constitutes a dynamic resource for modern day researchers who will explore different facets of the texts we have available in line with their own interests and to some extent the prevailing zeitgeist. These wider social influences are seen to have mediated the development and uptake of the theory itself.

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory (like any great theory) resembles a city. A city with broad new avenues and ancient, narrow backstreets known only to longtime residents, with noisy, crowded plazas and quiet, deserted squares, with large, modern edifices and decrepit little buildings. The individual areas of that city may not be situated on a single level: while some rise above the ground, others are submerged below it and cannot be seen at all. In essence, it is as though there were a second city that has intimate and complex associations with the ground-level city but completely invisible to many. And the sun rises above it all and the stars come out over it at night. Sometimes dust storms and hurricanes rage, or the rain beats down long and hard and "the sky is overcast." Life is a constant feeling of effervescence. Holidays and the

1 humdrum follow one another. The city changes, grows, and is rebuilt. Whole
2 neighborhoods are demolished. The center is sometimes over here, sometimes
3 over there. And so it goes. (Puzyrei, 2007, pp. 85-86)
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7 Smardon (2010) takes this line of argument somewhat further in suggesting that the
8 Vygotskian way of seeing the world has been and continues to be marginalised in
9 some academic settings
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11 The Vygotskian project has been largely overlooked outside of the field of
12 educational psychology, where Stetsenko argues it is still marginalized in
13 comparison to other, more dominant theoretical models. Furthermore, Marxist
14 psychology has never been a part of American sociology, a discipline that has
15 instead focused on macrosociological Marxist models, --- Thus, the
16 Vygotskian project exists at the marginal nexus of both psychology and
17 sociology. (Smardon, 2010, p.70)
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27 The reasons for formation of this marginal position may be that in attempting to
28 resolve the disconnection between disciplinary imaginations it manages to offend
29 both. Whatever the reasons it is clear that many disciplines contributed to the
30 formation of Vygotsky's ideas. For example, Van der Veer (1996) argued that
31 Humboldt with reference to linguistic mediation and Marx with reference to tool-use
32 and social and cultural progress influenced Vygotsky's concept of culture. He
33 suggested that the limitations in this aspect of Vygotsky's work are with respect to
34 non-linguistically mediated aspects of culture and the difficulty in explaining
35 innovation by individuals. Vygotsky's writing on the way in which psychological tools
36 and signs act in the mediation of social factors does not engage with a theoretical
37 account of the appropriation and/or and production of psychological tools within specific
38 forms of activity within or across institutions. Just as the development of Vygotsky's
39 work fails to provide an adequate account of social praxis so much sociological theory
40 is unable to provide descriptions of micro level processes, except by projecting macro
41 level concepts on to the micro level unmediated by intervening concepts though
42 which the micro can be both uniquely described and related to the macro level.
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Bernstein's Sociology of Pedagogy

Amongst sociologists of cultural transmission, Bernstein (2000) provides the sociology of this social experience which is most compatible with, but absent from, Vygotskian psychology. His theoretical contribution was directed towards the question as to how institutional relations of power and control translate into principles of communication and how these differentially regulate forms of consciousness. It was through Luria's attempts to disseminate his former colleague's work that Bernstein first became acquainted with Vygotsky's writing.

I first came across Vygotsky in the late 1950s through a translation by Luria of a section of *Thought and Speech* published in *Psychiatry* 2 1939. It is difficult to convey the sense of excitement, of thrill, of revelation this paper aroused: literally a new universe opened. Bernstein (1993 p xxiii)

This paper along with a seminal series of lectures given by Luria at the Tavistock Institute in London sparked an intense interest in the Russian Cultural Historical tradition and went on to exert a profound influence on post war developments in English in Education, the introduction of education for young people with severe and profound learning difficulties and theories practices designed to facilitate development an learning in socially disadvantaged groups in the UK. In November 1964 Bernstein wrote a letter to Vygotsky's widow outlining her late husband's influence on his developing thesis

As you may know, many of us working in the area of speech (from the perspective of psychology as well as from the perspective of sociology) think that we owe a debt to the Russian school, especially to works based on Vygotsky's tradition. I should say that in many respects, many of us are still trying to comprehend what he said. Bernstein (1964b p. 1)

In a commentary on the 1971 publication of 'The Psychology of Art' V.V. Ivanov (1971, p.269) identifies Bernstein's influence on the dissemination of Vygotsky's ideas in the west, despite some somewhat inaccurate claims about publication and disciplinary identity.

1 It was Vygotsky's (1978) non-dualist cultural historical conception of mind claims
2 that 'intermental' (social) experience shapes 'intramental' (psychological)
3 development that continued to influence Bernstein's thinking. This was understood as
4 a mediated process in which culturally produced artefacts (such as forms of talk,
5 representations in the form of ideas and beliefs, signs and symbols) shape and are
6 shaped by human engagement with the world (e.g. Vygotsky, 1987; Daniels, 2008).
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11 Language here is a system of meanings, a relay for the social, a primary
12 condition for the formation of consciousness and the levels and variety of its
13 function. Relation to (the social) precedes relations within (the individual).
14 This insight was of course, Mead's , much earlier than Vygotsky but his
15 insight produced a very different model. The I/Me dualism of the Meadian
16 self is a dualism endemic to European thought, perhaps even to christianity,
17 with its distinction between inner/outer, individual/society. The relaying,
18 mediating role of language is shared with Durkheim. Bernstein (1993 p. xiv)
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27 However, as Atkinson (1985) notes, despite his acquaintance with the various
28 philosophical and anthropological authors on language and symbolism including
29 Cassirer and Whorf and Vygotsky and Luria, Bernstein's approach epitomizes an
30 essentially macrosociological point of view.
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37 'It is undoubtedly true that in Bernstein's general approach there is little or no
38 concern for the perspectives, strategy and actions of individual social actors in
39 actual social settings.' Atkinson (1985 p.32)
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44 Durkheim influenced both Vygotsky and Bernstein. On the one hand Durkheim's
45 notion of collective representation allowed for the social interpretation of human
46 cognition, on the other it failed to resolve the issue as to how the collective
47 representation is interpreted by the individual. This is the domain so appropriately
48 filled by the later writings of Vygotsky. The fact that Bernstein has utilized Mead and
49 Vygotsky in the formulation of his model allows for the exploration of interpersonal
50 relations at the face to face level in the classroom. Many of the symbolic
51 interactionist and Vygotskian insights can be subsumed into his model which affords
52 the wider social dimension a central place in a general thesis.
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1 Although Vygotsky discussed the general importance of language and schooling for
2 psychological functioning, he failed to provide an analytical framework to analyse
3 and describe the real social systems in which these activities occur. Vygotsky never
4 indicated the social basis for this new use of words. The social analysis is thus
5 reduced to a semiotic analysis which overlooks the real world of social praxis
6 (Ratner, 1997).

14 ‘The feature that can be viewed as the proximal cause of the maturation of
15 concepts, *is a specific way of using the word*, specifically the functional
16 application of the sign as a means of forming concepts’.

20 (Vygotsky, 1987, pp. 131)

23 Whilst it is quite possible to interpret ‘a specific way of using the word’ to be an
24 exhortation to analyse the activities in which the word is used and meaning
25 negotiated, this was not elaborated by Vygotsky himself. The analysis of the structure
26 and function of semiotic psychological tools in specific activity contexts is not
27 explored. The challenge is to address the demands created by this absence. Bernstein
28 recognised the need for such an endeavour in his early writing.

35 Different social structures may generate different speech systems or linguistic
36 codes. The latter entail for the individual specific principles of choice which
37 regulate the selections he makes from the totality of options represented by a
38 given language. The principles of choice originally elicit, progressively
39 strengthen, and finally stabilize the planning procedures an individual uses in
40 the preparation of his speech and guide his orientation to the speech of others
41 (Bernstein, 1964a, p. 56).

49 Bernstein outlined a model for understanding the construction of pedagogic discourse.
50 In this context pedagogic discourse is a source of psychological tools or cultural
51 artefacts.

‘The basic idea was to view this (pedagogic) discourse as arising out of the action of a group of specialised agents operating in specialised setting in terms of the interests, often competing interests of this setting.’

(Bernstein1996p.116)

In Engeström's (1996) work within activity theory, which to some considerable extent has a Vygotskian root, the production of the outcome of activity is discussed but not the production and structure of cultural artefacts such as discourse. The production of discourse is not analysed in terms of the context of its production that is the rules, community and division of labour which regulate the activity in which subjects are positioned. It is therefore important that the discourse is seen within the culture and structures of schooling where differences in pedagogic practices, in the structuring of interactions and relationships and the generation of different criteria of competence will shape the ways in which children are perceived and actions are argued and justified. This is the agenda which Hasan (2005) has pursued in an approach that draws on Halliday, Vygotsky and Bernstein.

The application of Vygotsky by many social scientists (e.g. linguists, psychologists and sociologists) has been limited to relatively small scale interactional contexts often within schooling or some form of educational setting. The descriptions and the form of analysis are in some sense specific to these contexts. Sociologists have drawn on ethnomethodology or symbolic interactionism (see Makitalo, and Saljo, 2002 for a discussion). Here the focus is on the creation and negotiation of social order by participants in clearly defined and categorised settings. Data collection tends to focus on what is said. As Bernstein (1993) notes extra-contextual structures of power and their discursive regulation are necessarily excluded from the analysis.

He also notes the limitations of symbolic interactionism which, from his point of view:

focuses upon meanings, their negotiation, the construction of identities and their careers as these emerge out of face to face encounters in well bounded contexts. Here there is opportunity for showing relations to external constraints and possibilities in which interactions are embedded but not necessarily determined. Yet there still remains the crucial conceptual issue of

1 explicating this interrelation. This is not solved by a set of boxes which only
2 index the very processes to be described. Symbolic interaction provides
3 sensitive and insightful descriptions of interactions within the pedagogic
4 format. The description it gives necessarily stems from its own selective
5 focus. It tends to take for granted, that it does not include in its description,
6 how the discourse itself is constituted and recontextualized. The theory
7 focuses upon interactional formats rather than the way the **specialisation of**
8 **knowledge is constructed**. From the point of view of Vygotsky the "**tool**" is
9 not subject to analysis, although the articulation of the zone of proximal
10 development may well be. This absence of focus is common to both
11 linguistics and psychology. (Bernstein, 1993, p. xix)
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22 In his work on schooling, Bernstein, (2000) argues that pedagogic discourse is
23 constructed by a recontextualising principle which selectively appropriates, relocates,
24 refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order. He argues that in
25 order to understand pedagogic discourse as a social and historical construction
26 attention must be directed to the regulation of its structure, the social relations of its
27 production and the various modes of its recontextualising as a practice. For him
28 symbolic 'tools' are never neutral; intrinsic to their construction are social
29 classifications, stratifications, distributions and modes of recontextualizing.
30 The language that Bernstein (2000) has developed allows researchers to take
31 measures of institutional modality. That is to describe and position the discursive,
32 organizational and interactional practice of the institution. His model is one that is
33 designed to relate macro-institutional forms to micro-interactional levels and the
34 underlying rules of communicative competence. He focuses upon two levels; a
35 structural level and an interactional level. The structural level is analysed in terms of
36 the social division of labour it creates (e.g. the degree of specialisation, and thus
37 strength of boundary between professional groupings) and the interactional with the
38 form of social relation it creates (e.g. the degree of control that a manager may exert
39 over a team members' work plan). The social division is analysed in terms of strength
40 of the boundary of its divisions; that is, with respect to the degree of specialisation
41 (e.g. how strong is the boundary between professions such as teaching and social
42 work or one school curriculum subject and another). Thus the key concept at the
43 structural level is the concept of boundary, and structures are distinguished in terms of
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1 their relations between categories. The interactional level emerges as the regulation of
2 the transmission/ acquisition relation between teacher and taught (or the manager and
3 the managed); that is, the interactional level comes to refer to the pedagogic context
4 and the social relations of the workplace or classroom or its equivalent. Power is
5 spoken of in terms of classification, which is manifested in category relations that
6 themselves generate recognition rules. Possession of which allows the acquirer to
7 recognise as difference that is marked by a category, as would be the case of the rules
8 that allow a professional to be recognised as belonging to particular professional
9 group. This is not simply a matter of finding out which service someone belongs to, it
10 also refers to the ways in forms of talk and other actions may be seen to be belonging
11 to a particular professional category or grouping. When there is strong insulation
12 between categories (i.e. subject, teachers), with each category sharply distinguished,
13 explicitly bounded and having its own distinctive specialisation, then classification is
14 said to be strong. When there is weak insulation, then the categories are less
15 specialised and their distinctiveness is reduced; then classification is said to be weak.
16 Bernstein (1996) refined the discussion of his distinction between instructional and
17 regulative discourse. The former refers to the transmission of skills and their relation
18 to each other, and the latter refers to the principles of social order, relation and
19 identity. Whereas the principles and distinctive features of instructional discourse and
20 its practice are relatively clear (the what and how of the specific skills/competences to
21 be acquired and their relation to each other), the principles and distinctive features of
22 the transmission of the regulative are less clear as this discourse is transmitted through
23 various media and may indeed be characterised as a diffuse transmission. Regulative
24 discourse communicates the school's (or any institution's) public moral practice,
25 values beliefs and attitudes, principles of conduct, character and manner. It also
26 transmits features of the school's local history, local tradition and community
27 relations. Pedagogic discourse is modelled as one discourse created by the embedding
28 of instructional and regulative discourse. This model of pedagogic discourse provides
29 a response to one of the many theoretical demands which have remained unfulfilled in
30 the post-Vygotskian framework. The rejection of the cognitive / affective dualism
31 which Vygotsky announced was not followed by a model within which a unitary
32 conception of thinking and feeling could be discussed and implemented within
33 empirical research.

Different institutional modalities may be described in terms of the relationship between the relations of power and control, which gives rise to distinctive discursive artefacts. For example, with respect to schooling, where the theory of instruction gives rise to a strong classification and strong framing of the pedagogic practice, it is expected that there will be a separation of discourses (school subjects), an emphasis upon acquisition of specialised skills; the teacher will be dominant in the formulation of intended learning and the pupils are constrained by the teacher's practice. The relatively strong control on the pupils' learning, itself, acts as a means of maintaining order in the context in which the learning takes place. This form of the instructional discourse contains regulative functions. With strong classification and framing, the social relations between teachers and pupils will be more asymmetrical; that is, more clearly hierarchical. In this instance the regulative discourse and its practice is more explicit and distinguishable from the instructional discourse. Where the theory of instruction gives rise to a weak classification and weak framing of the practice, then children will be encouraged to be active in the classroom, to undertake enquiries and perhaps to work in groups at their own pace. Here the relations between teacher and pupils will have the appearance of being more symmetrical. In these circumstances it is difficult to separate instructional discourse from regulative discourse as these are mutually embedded. The formulation of pedagogic discourse as an embedded discourse comprised of instructional and regulative components allows for the analysis of the production of such embedded discourses in activities structured through specifiable relations of power and control within institutions. Bernstein provides an account of cultural transmission which is avowedly sociological in its conception. In turn the psychological account that has developed in the wake of Vygotsky's writing offers a model of aspects of the social formation of mind which is underdeveloped in Bernstein's work. The sociocultural account of the social, cultural, and historical context is insufficient for the task that Vygotsky set himself in his attempt to formulate a general social theory of the formation of mind. Bernstein's account of social positioning within the discursive practice that arises in institutional settings taken together with his analysis of the ways in which principles of power and control translate into principles of communication allows us to investigate how principles of communication differentially regulate forms of consciousness.

1 Bernstein's work provides the basis for a language of description which may be
2 applied at the level of principles of power and control which may then be translated
3 into principles of communication. Different social structures give rise to different
4 modalities of language which have specialised mediational properties. They have
5 arisen, have been shaped by, the social, cultural and historical circumstances in which
6 interpersonal exchanges arise and they in turn shape the thoughts and feelings, the
7 identities and aspirations for action of those engaged in interpersonal exchange in
8 those contexts. Hence the relations of power and control, which regulate social
9 interchange, give rise to specialised principles of communication. These mediate
10 social relations.
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20 To understand his views on what underlies the social subjects' participation
21 in discourse is to understand the true meaning of speaking each act of
22 speaking is a social event, behind which lies the history of the individual and
23 so the history of the community of which the individual is a member. (Hasan,
24 2001, p. 6)
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31 Mediation

32 Discourse may mediate human action in different ways. There is visible (Bernstein,
33 2000) or explicit (Wertsch, 2007) mediation in which the deliberate incorporation of
34 signs into human action is seen as a means of reorganising that action. This contrasts
35 with invisible or implicit mediation that involves signs, especially natural language,
36 whose primary function is IN communications which are part of a pre-existing,
37 independent stream of communicative action that becomes integrated with other
38 forms of goal-directed behaviour (Wertsch, 2007). Invisible semiotic mediation
39 occurs in discourse embedded in everyday ordinary activities of a social subject's life.
40 As Hasan (2001) argues, Bernstein further nuances this claim:
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51 what Bernstein referred to as the 'invisible' component of communication
52 (see Bernstein 1990: 17, figure 3.1 and discussion). The code theory relates
53 this component to the subject's social positioning. If we grant that 'ideology
54 is constituted through and in such positioning' (Bernstein 1990: 13), then
55 we grant that subjects' stance to their universe is being invoked: different
56 orders of relevance inhere in different experiences of positioning and being
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1 positioned. This is where the nature of what one wants to say, not its
2 absolute specifics, may be traced. Of course, linguists are right that
3 speakers can say what they want to say, but an important question is: what
4 is the range of meanings they freely and voluntarily mean, and why do they
5 prioritize those meanings when the possibilities of making meanings from
6 the point of view of the system of language are infinite? Why do they want
7 to say what they do say? The regularities in discourse have roots that run
8 much deeper than linguistics has cared to fathom. (Hasan, 2001, p.8)
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16 This argument is strengthened through its reference to a theoretical account which
17 provides greater descriptive and analytical purchase on the principles of regulation of
18 the social figured world, the possibilities for social position and the voice of
19 participants.
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22 These challenges of studying implicit or invisible mediation have been approached
23 from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Holland et al (1998) have studied the
24 development of identities and agency specific to historically situated, socially enacted,
25 culturally constructed worlds in a way which may contribute to the development of an
26 understanding of the way in which the development of social capital is situated. This
27 approach to a theory of identity in practice is grounded in the notion of a figured
28 world in which positions are taken up constructed and resisted. The Bakhtinian
29 concept of the 'space of authoring' is deployed to capture an understanding of the
30 mutual shaping of figured worlds and identities in social practice. They refer to
31 Bourdieu (1977) in their attempt to show how social position becomes disposition.
32 They argue for the development of social position into a positional identity into
33 disposition and the formation of what Bourdieu refers to as 'habitus'. Bernstein is
34 critical of habitus arguing that the internal structure of a particular habitus, the mode
35 of its specific acquisition, which gives it its specificity, is not described. For him
36 habitus is known by its output not its input. (Bernstein, 2000).
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52 Wertsch (1998) turned to Bakhtin's theory of speech genres rather than habitus. A
53 similar conceptual problem emerges with this body of work. Whilst Bakhtin's views
54 concerning speech genres are 'rhetorically attractive and impressive, the approach
55 lacks ... both a developed conceptual syntax and an adequate language of description.
56 Terms and units at both these levels in Bakhtin's writings require clarification;
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1 further, the principles that underlie the calibration of the elements of context with the
2 generic shape of the text are underdeveloped, as is the general schema for the
3 description of contexts for interaction' (Hasan, 2005). Bernstein acknowledges the
4 importance of Foucault's analysis of power, knowledge and discourse as he attempts
5 to theorise the discursive positioning of the subject. He complains that it lacks a
6 theory of transmission, its agencies and its social base.
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10 Identity and agency 11 12 13

14 Hasan brings Bernstein's concept of social positioning to the fore in her discussion of
15 social identity. Bernstein (1990, p. 13) used this concept to refer to the establishing of
16 a specific relation to other subjects and to the creating of specific relationships within
17 subjects. As Hasan (2005) notes, social positioning through meanings are inseparable
18 from power relations. Bernstein provided an elaboration of his early general
19 argument:
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27 "More specifically, class-regulated codes position subjects with respect to
28 dominant and dominated forms of communication and to the relationships
29 between them. Ideology is constituted through and in such positioning. From
30 this perspective, ideology inheres in and regulates modes of relation. Ideology
31 is not so much a content as a mode of relation for the realizing of content.
32 Social, cultural, political and economic relations are intrinsic to pedagogic
33 discourse." (Bernstein, 1990, pp. 13-14)
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43 Here the linkage is forged between social positioning and psychological attributes.
44 This is the process through which Bernstein talks of the shaping of the possibilities for
45 consciousness. The dialectical relation between discourse and subject makes it
46 possible to think of pedagogic discourse as a semiotic means that regulates or traces
47 the generation of subjects' positions in discourse. We can understand the potency of
48 pedagogic discourse in selectively producing subjects and their identities in a
49 temporal and spatial dimension (Diaz, 2001, pp.106-108). As Hasan (2005) argues,
50 within the Bernsteinian thesis there exists an ineluctable relation between one's social
51 positioning, one's mental dispositions and one's relation to the distribution of labour
52 in society. Here the emphasis on discourse is theorised not only in terms of the
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1 shaping of cognitive functions but also, as it were invisibly, in its influence on
2 dispositions, identities and practices' (Bernstein,1990, p. 33).
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5 Within Engestrom's approach to CHAT the subject is often discussed in terms of
6 individuals, groups or perspectives / views. I would argue that the way in which
7 subjects are positioned with respect to one another within an activity carries with it
8 implications for engagement with tools and objects. It may also carry implications for
9 the ways in rules, community and the division of labour regulate the actions of
10 individuals and groups.
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18 Holland *et al.* (1998) have studied the development of identities and agency specific
19 to historically situated, socially enacted, culturally constructed worlds. They draw on
20 Bakhtin (1978, 1986) and Vygotsky to develop a theory of identity as constantly
21 forming and person as a composite of many often contradictory, self understandings
22 and identities which are distributed across the material and social environment and
23 rarely durable (p. 8). Holland et al (1998) draw on Leont'ev in the development of the
24 concept of socially organized and reproduced *figured worlds* which shape and are
25 shaped by participants and in which social position establishes possibilities for
26 engagement. They also argue that figured worlds:
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36 [D]istribute 'us' not only by relating actors to landscapes of action (as
37 personae) and spreading our senses of self across many different field s of
38 activity, but also by giving the landscape human voice and tone. – Cultural
39 worldsⁱ are populated by familiar social types and even identifiable persons,
40 not simply differentiated by some abstract division of labour. The identities we
41 gain within figured worlds are thus specifically historical developments,
42 grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social
43 organization of those world's activity (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 41.my
44 underlining)
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54 This approach to a theory of identity in practice is grounded in the notion of a figured
55 world in which positions are taken up constructed and resisted. The Bakhtinian
56 concept of the 'space of authoring' is deployed to capture an understanding of the
57 mutual shaping of figured worlds *and* identities in social practice. Holland *et*
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al.(1998) refer to Bourdieu (c.f. 1977) in their attempt to show how social position becomes disposition. They argue for the development of social position into a positional identity into disposition and the formation of what Bourdieu refers to as ‘habitus’. It is here that I feel that this argument could be strengthened through reference to a theoretical account which provides greater descriptive and analytical purchase on the principles of regulation of the social figured world, the possibilities for social position and the voice of participants.

Engestrom (1999), who has tended to concentrate on the structural aspects of CHAT, offers the suggestion that the division of labour in an activity creates different positions for the participants and that the participants carry their own diverse histories with them into the activity. This echoes the earlier assertion from Leont’ev:

Activity is the minimal meaningful context for understanding individual actions.... In all its varied forms, the activity of the human individual is a system set within a system of social relations.... The activity of individual people thus depends on their social position, the conditions that fall to their lot, and an accumulation of idiosyncratic, individual factors. Human activity is not a relation between a person and a society that confronts him...in a society a person does not simply find external conditions to which he must adapt his activity, but, rather, these very social conditions bear within themselves the motives and goals of his activity, its means and modes. (Leont’ev, 1978, p.10, our underlining.).

In activity the possibilities for the use of artefacts depends on the social position occupied by an individual. Sociologists and sociolinguists have produced empirical verification of this suggestion (e.g., Bernstein, 2000; Hasan, 2001; Hasan and Cloran, 1990). My suggestion is that the notion of ‘subject’ within activity theory requires expansion and clarification. In many studies the term ‘subject perspective’ is used which arguably infers subject position but does little to illuminate the formative processes that gave rise to this perspective.

Holland *et al.* also argue that multiple identities are developed within figured worlds and that these are “historical developments, grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organization of those world’s activity” (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 41). This body of work represents a significant development in our understanding of the concept of the ‘subject’ in activity theory. As Roth (2007) notes:

Goals and actions are free-floating, generally intelligible, cultural-historically contingent possibilities. Because concrete embodied actions articulate between society and the self, a person’s identity does not constitute a singularity but is itself inherently intelligible within the cultural unit. It is because of what they see each other doing that two (or more) persons come to ‘recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another’ Publicly visible actions serve as the ground of recognizing in the other another self that recognizes in me its corresponding other. It is this linkage between self and other through patterned embodied actions that have led some to theorize identity in terms of agency and culture in which a person participates (Roth, 2007, p.144)

Voice and message

For my point of view there remains a need to develop the notion of ‘figured world’ in such a way that we can theories, analyze and describe the processes by which that world is ‘figured’. Bernstein’s (1990: 13) concept of social positioning seems to me to concur with the analysis outlined by Holland *et al* (1998). He relates social positioning to the formation of mental dispositions in terms of the identity’s relation to the distribution of labour in society. It is through the deployment of his concepts of voice and message that Bernstein forges the link between division of labour, social position and discourse and opens up the possibilities for a language of description that will serve empirical as well analytical purposes. The distinction between what can be recognized as belonging to a voice and a particular message is formulated in terms of distinction between relations of power and relations of control. Bernstein (1990) adapted the concept of voice from his reading of *The Material Word* by Silverman and Torode (1980).

1 From this perspective classificatory (boundary) relations establish 'voice'.
2 'Voice' is regarded somewhat like a cultural larynx which sets the limits on
3 what can be legitimately put together (communicated). Framing (control)
4 relations regulate the acquisition of this voice and create the 'message (what is
5 made manifest, what can be realized). (Bernstein, 1990, p. 260.)
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10 In his last book he continues:
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14 Voice refers to the limits on what could be realized if the identity was to be
15 recognized as legitimate. The classificatory (boundary) relation established the
16 voice. In this way power relations, through the classificatory relation,
17 regulated voice. However voice , although a necessary condition for
18 establishing what could and could not be said and its context, could not
19 determine what was said and the form of its contextual realization; the
20 message. The message was a function of framing (control). The stronger the
21 framing the smaller the space accorded for potential variation in the message.
22 (Bernstein, 2000, p. 204.)
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32 Thus social categories constitute voices and control over practices constitutes
33 message. Identity becomes the outcome of the voice – message relation. Production
34 and reproduction have their social basis in categories and practices; that categories are
35 constituted by the social division of labour and that practices are constituted by social
36 relations within production/ reproduction; that categories constitute 'voices' and that
37 practices constitute their 'messages'; message is dependant upon 'voice', and the
38 subject is a dialectical relation between 'voice' and message (Bernstein, 1990, p. 27).
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47 Hasan (2001, p. 8) suggests that Bernstein's analysis of how subjects are positioned
48 and how they position themselves in relation to the social context of their discourse,
49 offers an explanation of discursive practice, in terms of the relations of power and
50 control which regulate speaking subjects. However, the theoretical move which
51 Bernstein makes in relating positioning to the distribution of power and principles of
52 control opens up the possibility of grounding the analysis of social positioning and
53 mental dispositions in relation to the distribution of labour in an activity. Through the
54 notions of 'voice' and 'message' he brings the division of labour and principles of
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control (rules) into relation with social position in practice. This theoretical stance suggests that activity theory could also develop a language of description which allows for the parameters of power and control to be considered at structural and interactional levels of analysis. A systematic approach to the analysis and description of the formation of categories through the maintenance and shifting of boundaries and principles of control as exercised within categories would bring a powerful tool to the undoubted strengths of activity theory. This would then allow the analysis to move from one level to another in the same terms rather than treat division of labour and discourse as analytically independent items. Bernstein argues that positioning is in a systematic relation to the distribution of power and principles of control. I suggest that this approach to understanding the notion of social positioning as the underlying, invisible component which 'figures' (as in Holland) practices of communication and gives rise to the shaping of identity provides an important potential development from the current status of third generation activity theory.

Such a development requires a theoretical account of social relations and positioning. The theoretical move which Bernstein makes in relating positioning to the distribution of power and principles of control opens up the possibility of grounding the analysis of social positioning and mental dispositions in relation to the distribution of labour in an activity. Through the notions of 'voice' and 'message' he brings the division of labour and principles of control (rules) into relation with social position in practice. The implication is that 'subject' in an activity theory driven depiction should be represented by a space of possibility (voice) in which a particular position (message) is taken up. Thus subject would be represented by a socially structured zone of possibility rather than a singular point. This representation would signify a move to attempt to theorise the subject as emerging in a world that was 'figured' by relations of power and control.

Conclusion

The language that Bernstein has developed allows researchers to develop measures of school modality. That is to describe and position the discursive, organizational and interactional practice of the institution. He also noted the need for the extension of

1 this work in his discussion of the importance of Vygotsky's work for research in
2 education.

3 His theoretical perspective also makes demands for a new methodology, for
4 the development of languages of description which will facilitate a *multi-level*
5 understanding of pedagogic discourse, the varieties of its practice and contexts
6 of its realization and production. (Bernstein, 1993, p. xxiii)
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10 This approach to modelling the structural relations of power and control in
11 institutional settings taken together with a theory of cultural-historical artefacts that
12 invisibly or implicitly mediate the relations of participants in practices forms a
13 powerful alliance. It carries with it the possibility of rethinking notions of agency and
14 reconceptualising subject position in terms of the relations between possibilities
15 afforded within the division of labour and the rules that constrain possibility and
16 direct and deflect the attention of participants.
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27 It accounts for the ways in which the practices of a community, such as school and
28 the family, are structured by their institutional context and that social structures
29 impact on the interactions between the participants and the cultural tools.
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31 Thus, it is not just a matter of the structuring of interactions between the participants
32 and other cultural tools; rather it is that the institutional structures themselves are
33 cultural products that serve as mediators in their own right. In this sense, they are the
34 'message', that is, a fundamental factor of education. As Hasan (2001) argues, when
35 we talk, we enter the flow of communication in a stream of both history and the
36 future. There is therefore a need to analyze and codify the mediational structures as
37 they deflect and direct attention of participants and as they are shaped through
38 interactions which they also shape. In this sense, combining the intellectual legacies
39 of Bernstein and Vygotsky permits the development of cultural historical analysis of
40 the invisible or implicit mediational properties of institutional structures which
41 themselves are transformed through the actions of those whose interactions are
42 influenced by them. This move would serve to both expand the gaze of post
43 Vygotskian theory and at the same time bring sociologies of cultural transmission into
44 a framework in which institutional structures are analyzed as historical products
45 which themselves are subject to dynamic transformation and change as people act
46 within and on them.
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